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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the method comprising:

connecting from the first client to a communications system host;

sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transferring a file over the direct connection.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications system host.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the second client accepts the request based on indicated preferences of the second subscriber.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is initiated by the second client.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection to the second client is established using an IP address of the second client.

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6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating that a direct connection to the second client is established.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant messaging host.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a data file.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a text file.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a video file.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

14. (Original) A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the method comprising:

connecting from the second client to a communications system host;

receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

accepting the request from the first client;

establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receiving a file over the direct connection.

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15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications system host.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein accepting the request is based on indicated preferences of the second subscriber.

17. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising initiating the direct connection.

18. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is established by the first client using an IP address of the second client.

19. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating that a direct connection to the first client is established.

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant messaging host.

21. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a data file.

22. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a text file.

23. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

24. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

25. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a video file.

26. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an indication that the first subscriber using the first client is composing a message.

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27. (Original) The method of claim 26, further comprising receiving the message composed by the first subscriber from the first client.

28. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

29. (Original) An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a first client configured to:

connect from the first client to a communications system host;

send through the communications system host a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

when the second client accepts the request, establish a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transfer a file over the direct connection.

30. (Original) An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a second client configured to:

connect from the second client to a communications system host;

receive, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

accept the request from the first client;

establish a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receive a file over the direct connection.

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31. (Original) A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions for:

connecting from the first client to a communications system host;

sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transferring a file over the direct connection.

32. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

33. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client device.

34. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host device.

35. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a propagated signal.

36. (Original) A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions for:

connecting from the second client to a communications system host;

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receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

accepting the request from the first client;

establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receiving a file over the direct connection.

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36 ~~37~~ wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36 ~~37~~ wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client device.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36 ~~37~~ wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host device.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 36 ~~37~~ wherein the computer readable medium is a propagated signal.

41-44. (Canceled)

45. (New) A user interface configured to enable to acceptance or rejection of a file transfer from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the user interface comprising:

a first graphical user interface element structured and arranged to notify an operator of the second client of a request by the first client to establish a direct connection to the second client, the request being communicated to the second client by a communications system host and the direct connection bypassing the communications system host; and

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a second graphical user interface element structured and arranged to enable an operator of the second client to authorize a file transfer over the direct connection.

46. (New) The user interface of claim 45 wherein the first graphical user interface element is a dialog box.

47. (New) The user interface of claim 1 wherein the second graphical user interface element includes a set of sub elements selectable by the recipient to authorize or reject establishment of the direct connection.

48. (New) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements are option buttons.

49. (New) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to authorize the direct connection.

50. (New) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to reject the direct connection.

51. (New) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to ignore the request.

52. (New) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to warn the first client not to send future requests for a direct connection to the second client.